



SECRETARY'S COLUMN: **DATCP is Working for You All Day, Every Day**

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MADISON – The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection is working for you all day, every day. DATCP is here to educate, answer questions and provide guidance to ensure a healthy environment, food supply and business practices in Wisconsin.

The year 2012 will be remembered for its extreme weather conditions. There was an early spring-late frost that damaged fruit crops. Then came the drought. Some of Wisconsin's farmers faced tremendous challenges, especially livestock producers looking for feed during a time of high prices and low supply. DATCP staff coordinated with other state agencies and University of Wisconsin-Extension to make sure producers knew what resources were available, including the Farmer to Farmer Network.

DATCP and its partners understand that the impact of 2012 will be felt for months if not years to come. The Wisconsin Farm Center here at DATCP is available to assist with financial planning, transition work, lender mediation or service referrals.

We are committed to the future of Wisconsin agriculture. During 2012, 170,000 acres across the state were added to Agricultural Enterprise Areas, a tool that can help individuals and communities meet locally identified goals for preserving agricultural land and encourage agricultural economic development. This brings the total number of AEAs to 510,000 acres.

DATCP continues to cooperate with the Wisconsin Livestock Identification Consortium on animal identification and improved traceability. Wisconsin farmers raise quality livestock and crops that become the value-added products sold to our customers around the world. During the first three quarters of 2012, Wisconsin exported over \$2.2 billion of agricultural products to over 145 countries, an increase of 4% over the same period in 2011. Our state is recognized worldwide for its agricultural products, technology, research and more.

Wisconsin's dairy industry leaders met at DATCP in 2012 to form the Grow Wisconsin Dairy 30x20 Initiative, which seeks to meet the growing demand of the marketplace for fresh, high-quality milk by offering services to farmers. By providing a 'one stop shop' at DATCP, farmers can connect with available resources to increase profitability by making management and operational system improvements. Profitable farms will ensure the viability of Wisconsin's dairy farming and processing industries.

Our food safety staff is out in the field each day performing inspections to guarantee the quality and safety of our abundant food supply in Wisconsin. During 2012, DATCP has completed over 70,000 food safety inspections, from our retail food establishments and processing plants to our food warehouses and dairy farms.

DATCP's responsibilities are diverse, working for our consumers from rural and urban communities. In the coming year, DATCP will continue to increase outreach and education to protect consumers and ensure a fair business environment. When a consumer files complaints and violations are found, DATCP will work to resolve problems and find a solution. Through the end of September, we have had 21,901 consumer contacts, closed 8,315 complaints and recovered \$1.94 million.

To ensure efficient service to our customers, we are working from the inside out. During this past year, we completed all the foundation systems for an improved Information Technology (IT) program that will allow our customers to communicate with us online, whether applying for a license or seeking assistance or filing a complaint. Program by program, this technology will become live and accessible by everyone in the next several years. We are also implementing a program across the agency, known in the business world as Six Sigma. DATCP employees will be working to streamline processes by evaluating our internal procedures, which will ultimately benefit our customers.

The way DATCP can best work for you is to hear from you. Ask us how to deal with fertilizers. Tell us your challenges in starting a food business. Share with us your ideas for growing your agri-business. Contact us so we can continue to work for you all day, every day in 2013.

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To connect with financial planning assistance, contact the Wisconsin Farm Center at 800-942-2474.

To learn more about exporting, contact the Wisconsin International Trade Team at 800-462-5237.

To locate dairy resources, contact the Grow Wisconsin Dairy 30x20 Team at 855-943-2479.

To file a complaint, contact the Consumer Protection Hotline at 800-422-7128.